The Fallibility or Infallibility of the Propositions of the Qur'ān and the Testaments

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Abstract

One of the most important foundations of knowing and interpreting the Qur'ān, the Torah, and the Gospel is the belief in the infallibility and impeccability of the words and propositions of these divine scriptures. If the verses and statements of the noble Qur'ān and the Testaments during the revelation era and the ensuing times have been afflicted with distortion and contradiction, then they cannot be trusted. One of the dimensions of the originality and authoritativeness of the divine scriptures is their freedom from any kind of mistake, disharmony, and disagreement. When a person tries to understand the verses based on such a viewpoint, he will expect nothing but harmony from the verses and will try to figure out this harmony and convergence. In this article, various existing viewpoints in this regard are presented and examined, and it is concluded that the infallibility of the divine scriptures is the stance taken by the majority of Muslims and the Judaist tradition, while there are disagreements among Christians. The main reason is the viewpoints of Muslims, Jews, and Christians toward revelation.

Keywords

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Introduction

Muslims, Christians, and Jews believe that God has appointed prophets to guide the human and has delivered His message by those prophets to them. The collection of these divine messages has formed the divine scriptures, including the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the noble Qur'ān. These are the reference points for billions of people who believe in God. Undoubtedly, resorting to the divine teachings can take the believers to the bliss only if those teachings are highly valid. Muslims have absolute consensus that there is no mistake in the Qur'ān, and Jews believe in the freedom of the Torah from mistakes, while only some Christians believe in the impossibility of mistakes in the Testaments. This disagreement among the followers of Abrahamic religions about the infallibility of their divine scriptures originates from their different views to the nature of revelation and its role in the life of the human, where the majority of Muslims and Jews and a minority of Christians have emphasized the divinity of the propositions of their divine scriptures (*Encyclopedia of judaica*, 1982, v. 15: 1235).

Some Christians have generalized the divinity of the propositions to the whole text of their divine scripture, including the Old Testament and the New Testament, and believe that God has set a sacred word objectively in the minds of the receivers of the revelation (Lofmark, 1990: 7). At any rate, this matter is one of the foundational issues in understanding the religious texts. This article tries to examine this issue based on the texts of these sacred scriptures. The most important criteria of the infallibility of a text can be summarized in the following two points:

A) The degree to which a text is free from the untrue.

B) The degree to which a text is free from contradiction and discrepancy.

Fallibility or infallibility of the propositions of the Qur'ān

One of the certain and famous principles agreed upon by all Muslims and supported by numerous reasons is the absolute freedom of the Qur'ān from any type of mistake. According to the qur'ānic verses, no worldly factor – i.e. the jinni, the humans, or even the blessed being of the Prophet of Islam (s) – (Qur'ān 69:45-46) can interfere with the sending of the divine revelation at its different stages, which involve the reception of the message by Gabriel, delivering it to the Prophet (s), and its full communication by him to all Muslims. Accordingly, the possibility of any mistake and contradiction within the qur'ānic verses have been intensely rejected by the Shī'a and Sunnī thinkers. Many narrators have narrated all verses of the Qur'ān from the prophet from generation to generation up to now. As Āyatullāh Khu'ī writes: "All Muslims agree that the way to prove [the authenticity of] the Qur'ān is exclusively through successive transmission

and have ruled that the Qur'ān is the Divine Word which is confirmed through successive transmission" (Khu'ī, 1945: 124). The historical chain of ample means and successive narrations on the recordation of the Qur'ān has no missing bead. The revelation and recordation have existed right from the beginning of the qur'ānic revelation to our time through ample means, which included checking the oral dictation by the written recordation and vice versa. However, there are missing beads with regard to the Torah and the Gospel, which include the historical distance between the revelation time to the recordation time, the non-generality of the ample means, and the weakness in their written and oral recordation (Kamālī Dizfūlī, 1992: 178-179). Therefore, the qur'ānic text has a divine identity and originality. Although some events and conditions might have had a role in the generation and gradual revelation of the verses, all words and meanings of the qur'ānic propositions are metaphysical, and the mind and mentality of the Prophet (s) or other issues have not been effective in the formation of the identity of the Qur'ān (Shākir, 2009: 61-65). There are also some verses in the Qur'ān that emphasize its infallibility (Qur'ān 4:82; 41:41-42).

The freedom of the qur'ānic texts from the untrue

The untrue is a general concept which entails various aspects, including the historical untrue, the historical and geographical mistakes, manuscript mistakes, and the slanders attributed to God and the prophets. Although the "Tadabbur" (reflection) and "Nafy bāṭil" (rejection of the wrong) verses can be used to prove the freedom of the Qur'ān from the untrue, God has confirmed the truthfulness of the Qur'ān in numerous verses (e.g. Qur'ān 2:176; 4:105; 17:105). Therefore, the Qur'ān is free from any untrue and has nothing but truth and accuracy. Now we examine some of these issues.

Slander and accusation

Unlike the illustration of the prophets in the Bible, the Qur'ān gives in a beautiful and real picture of them (Bible: 45-48; Qur'ān 2:124; 6:84-90; 53:3-4). From the viewpoint of Imāms (a), too, the infallibility of the prophets is among the definitive and certain principles; they have insisted upon it and discussed it in scientific meetings (Jawādī Āmulī, 2014, vol. 3: 227). Different narrations have been narrated from Imāms in this regard (Majlisī, 2007, vol. 24: 275). The prophets' infallibility is one of the foundations of Islamic beliefs which guarantees the accuracy of their prophetic mission. Moreover, the reason for the appointment of the prophets is the evolution of the ethical values (ibid., vol. 16: 210). All divine religions as well as the history confirm that the divine prophets have not provided any message other than the ethical training of the human.

Historical and geographical mistakes

There is no falsehood in the historical or geographical reports of the Qur'ān. The qur'ānic stories are based on historical facts and events, and this is stipulated by the Qur'ān itself (Qur'ān 3:62). Researchers believe that although the Qur'ān has used the literary style in its most innovate manner to promote its invitation to the right, it maintains realism in the presentation of the stories so as to give emphasis to their effect. Since the Qur'ān is the book of guidance and does not need unreal issues, it has avoided narrating imaginary events (Ma'rifat, 2010, vol. 7: 264-265). One of the wonderful methods of the Qur'ān in the presentation of the stories of the past people is historical realism, i.e. the Qur'ān treats historical events with realism and an objective view rather imagination. If the stories of the Qur'ān were unreal, they could not have a constructive effect, and this would contradict the purpose of the Qur'ān. Pertaining to this discussion is martyr Muṭahharī's evaluation of the qur'ānic stories through symbolism, which concludes that the Qur'ān does not use unreal and untrue events because it does not believe in the viewpoint that the end justifies the means (Muṭahharī, 1999, vol. 16: 99). Contrary to this viewpoint, some people believe that all or most of the qur'ānic stories have been adopted from the famous stories common among people of its revelation era or are allegorical (Khalafullāh, 1999: 87-91). However, God explicitly introduces the qur'ānic stories as based on reality and facts, and rejects the existence of any unreal or mental imaginations in its reports (Qur'ān 7:7).

Manuscript mistakes

With regard to the manuscript mistakes and spelling problems, it should be said that in the opinion of some Qur'ān researchers, there are some suchlike mistakes in the Qur'ān, though not as widespread as is the case with the Torah and Gospel.

Some contemporary Qur'ān researchers believe that writing represents the utterance pertaining to the intended meaning and concept. Therefore, writing should be totally congruent with the related verbal utterance; this way, the written form will be flawlessly representative of the verbal form. On the other hand, the writing style is not completely congruent with this principle, but until suchlike common disagreements – which originated from the unfamiliarity of the revelation era Arabs with the writing methods and techniques – make no problem in the expression of intention, there is no problem (Ma'rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 315).

One of the experts in this field describes the Qur'ān as follows: "Unlike Christianity, Islam has a fixed, synchronous text. The Qur'ān is a divine revelation that was descended by the archangel Gabriel, was immediately

transcribed by the believers, and was categorized into chapters during the lifetime of the Prophet. However, unlike what many Christians think, the Christian revelation is merely based on numerous and indirect testimonies, as we don't have access to any testimony by an eye-witness of the life of the Prophet Jesus" (Bucaille, 1994: 8). Elsewhere, he asserts his belief in an unquestionable originality for the Qur'ān as a result of which the Qur'ān has a distinctive status among the divine scriptures, one which is not shared by the "Old Testament" nor the "New Testament" (ibid.: 173).

The freedom of the qur'ānic text from contradiction

The origin, historical evolution, and issues related to the delusive claim on the existence of contradiction in the noble Qur'ān indicate that this claim has not been explicitly suggested by anyone during the lifetime of the Prophet (s), and if some Muslims disputed in some cases, these have not been over issues that could threaten the doctrinal principles. In the same vein, no one during the time of the Companions claimed for the existence of contradiction in the Qur'ān (Īmānī Langirūdī, 1999: 16-33).

In the eyes of some Qur'ān researchers, the history of this issue starts from the early days of Islam when – according to some traditions – a disbeliever came to Imām 'Alī (a) and told him about his doubts about the Qur'ān. In response, Imām introduced the qur'ānic verses as confirming each other (Ma'rifat, 2010: 266-267).

Although the claims on the existence of contradiction in the qur'ānic verses might seem to be new, their nature and topic are not new at all. Nonetheless, some people during the history have set the grounds intentionally or unintentionally for suchlike discussions, including orientalists such as Goldziher who has got this false claim from the past disbelievers and hostile figures. Goldziher considers the Qur'ān – which is the primary base and the sacred scripture of Muslims – a combination of faults and disagreements and writes: "It is difficult to obtain a unique and contradiction-free faith from the Qur'ān" (Goldziher, 19955: 68). Undoubtedly, the sacred realm of the noble Qur'ān is free from any contradiction and disagreement and the Wise God's word has nothing in it but wisdom, righteousness, and truth, is free from any wrong and untruth, and no falsity or doubt can be found in it (Qur'ān 2:2; 41:41-42).

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī has emphasized the realism and truthfulness of the Qur'ān repeatedly in his *Al-Mīzān* commentary. Regarding one of the dimensions of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān (i.e. freedom from disagreement and contradiction) which is also mentioned in the "Tadabbur" verse, he has a point that might be used to confirm our foregoing discussion: "If an utterance is based on truth and completely conforms to reality, its

propositions do not reject each other, because unity and harmony only exist among the principles and elements of the right (i.e. the real phenomenon). No truth nullifies another truth and no true utterance rejects another true utterance. It is the wrong that contradicts another wrong and the truth" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1972, vol. 1: 72-73). All Muslim scholars agree that there is no contradiction in the Qurʾān, because they believe that the Qurʾān is God's Words, it is impossible to have a true contradiction in it, and the Qurʾān has a robust language (Khuʾī, 1945: 55-56). Relying on Kirmānī's viewpoint, Suyūṭī suggests that there are two types of disagreement. The first one is contradiction in which one phenomenon is opposite to the other one and this is impossible in the Qurʾān. The second one is the difference in concomitance which agrees with both aspects, such as the disagreement in the length of the chapters, verses, etc. (Suyūṭī, 1985: 100).

When Ghazālī was asked about the meaning of the verse "Had it been from other than Allāh, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy" (Qurʾān 4:82), he answered: "The word 'ikhtilāf' [discrepancy] is a term that has some similar meanings. The rejection of discrepancy in the Qurʾān does not mean that people should not disagree about it; rather, it aims at rejecting the existence of discrepancy in the essence of the Qurʾān. When it is said: this utterance is mukhtalif (has discrepancy), it means that its beginning and conclusion are different in eloquence, i.e. a part of it invites people to faith and another part to the worldly life … [but] the Sublime God's Words are away from suchlike discrepancies, because it has been structured based on a unique method and with the utmost eloquence in both its beginning and conclusion. However, the human and poets' words usually get entangled with such disagreements … the origin of this disagreement is the difference in desires and instincts, and if the origin of the Qurʾān was his words or those of other people, it could not be free from such discrepancies and disharmonies (Zarkishī, 2004, vol. 2: 54-56).

Reasons for having the illusion of contradiction in the Qurʾān

The Qurʾān researchers have enumerated various reasons for this illusion. For example, Zarkishī considers five reasons for some to have the illusion of contradiction in the Qurʾān and answers them (ibid.: 64-74). Likewise, Ṭāhā Dīwānī has expressed the reason for having the illusion of contradiction in the qurʾānic texts in the form of two general principles (Rabīʿ Nattāj, 2003: 226).

From the viewpoint of exegetes, some seeming contradictions in the words and meanings of the Qurʾān are not contradictions in decree, but rather are contradictions in terms, which originates from the consideration of various interests and are not deemed as disagreement and contradiction by the thinkers (Ṭabarī, 1999, vol. 4: 114; Zamakhsharī, 1995, vol. 15: 546).

One of the reasons for such a false claim – intentionally or unintentionally – is their lack of knowledge about the scientific premises and types of knowledge that are required for the interpretation of the Qur'ān. The prerequisites of interpretation can be divided into scientific and spiritual ones. With regard to the scientific aspect, the books on qur'ānic sciences stipulate that the exegete should have a great bulk of general and specialized knowledge. Another condition for the exegete is to have a pure heart and soul and a luminous inward so as to be able to understand the truth of the Sublime God's words (Suyūṭī, 1985: 201-205; Muṣṭafawī, 2002, vol. 1: 12).

Criticism of the claim about the existence of contradiction in the Qur'ān
One of the most important verses that proves the freedom of the Qur'ān from contradiction is the "Tadabbur" verse:

"Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allāh, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy" (Qur'ān 4:82).

This noble verse states that if the Qur'ān was not a divine book and had been generated by a human, it would certainly have contradictions and disharmonies. In particular, if it was generated under conditions similar to those of the revelation of the Qur'ān, it would experience change and contradiction. The qur'ānic statements and content are revealed in an interrelated and precise manner based on a harmonious process and context. Despite the variety of topics they introduce, the qur'ānic verses are not only harmonious, but also corroborate each other, as suggested by the statements of the Commander of the Faithful (a) (Nahj al-balāgha, n.d.: sermon 133).

Some believe that the Qur'ān verifies the truthfulness and accuracy of the prophethood of the noble Prophet (s) in three ways: the eloquence of the Qur'ān, the inclusion of the reports of the unseen in the Qur'ān, and the freedom of the Qur'ān from contradiction. It is this last aspect that is emphasized in the foregoing verse (Ḥaqqī Burūsawī, 1985, vol. 2: 245).

Another verse that is used to reject the existence of contradiction in the Qur'ān is the "Nafy bāṭil" verse: "… No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise" (Qur'ān 41:4-42).

If rejection targets the essence and substance of a phenomenon, it will also include all its instances. Similarly, this verse rejects the essence of falsehood in the Qur'ān and consequently, it denies the existence of contradiction in the Qur'ān as an instance of that falsehood.

Fallibility or infallibility of the propositions of the Testaments
The Judaist tradition and the some Christians believe that the existence of mistakes in the Bible is impossible. However, the new Christian critics do not hold such a belief and confess to the existence of some untrue cases or contradictions in the Testaments. As Thomas Michael writes: "The majority of contemporary Christian researchers reject the theory of the infallibility of the Bible. However, all Christians believe that the original message has been from God and so, it is right. But the form of the message is not related to God only; it is also influenced by the human factor. From the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, reading God's message, we achieve the things that God wants us to learn through the human writer. Sometimes this human writer has false opinions or misinformation with enduring effects on the text of the book. Nonetheless, this relates to the form of the message but has no effect on its essence" (Michael, 1999: 27). Of course, not all Christians believe that the human role in the creation of Bible necessarily means introducing mistakes into these books; rather, many Christians, even Protestants, emphasize the infallibility and impeccability of Bible (Anas, 1890:73-79). Both views lead to the same result, because the existence of such mistakes does not falsify the originality of the Bible. At any rate, this claim is questionable and some Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have expressed doubtful views to the infallibility of the Bible in their writings.

The degree of the Testaments' freedom from the untrue
Although many untrue cases are found in the Testaments, we do not aim at mentioning them to question the claim on their infallibility, especially because of the point that these principles are based on other principles which are not similarly believed in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A look at the content of the Bible and its inconsistencies indicates that some issues in the Bible are against the infallibility criterion and are not acceptable at all. Some might consider inward justification for some issues in the Testaments, but when there is no indicator, the outer meaning of a statement is adopted, and this brings about negative consequences.

Slander and accusation
In the Torah and Gospel, there are untrue slanders and accusations attributed to God and the prophets. In the Judaist and Christian sacred scriptures, the sublime God is humanized, and the concept of prophethood and the guidance of people do not require any outstanding conditions or capabilities. Some of the texts that exist in the Old and New Testaments describe God and His prophets with qualities far lower than their dignity. Some of these are as follows.

The Old Testament

What has been stated in the Book of Genesis might be an evidence of the foregoing point: "On the seventh day, God finished what he was making. Then, God called the seventh day a glorified one and sanctified it, because on that day, He took a rest after finishing His job" (Genesis: 2:2-3). However, the truth of this issue has been given in the Qur'ān this way: "We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us" (Qur'ān 50:38).

Ibn Maymūm believes that "Istirāḫat" (rest) has a figurative and metaphorical meaning, i.e. the creation of the world was finished, and this is like "kaff al-kalām", because this term is used when the person has said his word and does not continue talking. It might also mean the utterance that the philosophers say, i.e. the creation of the world was finished, and the world started to rest (not God). Moreover, if the word "Istirāḫ" is considered a muʿtal al-fāʾ or muʿtal al-lām verb, it means "aqarra wa amarra", i.e. the world was created in a certain form, and continued in that form (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., vol.1: 165-166). He concludes at the end that this description intends to express the ultimate volition of God and the fulfillment of his want (ibid.: 167).

In the light of the qur'ānic verses and Islamic traditions, there are cases in the Bible – especially in the Testaments – that are considered by Muslims as definitely distorted. For example, in the Book of Genesis, Sarah is introduced as the sister and wife of Ibrahim (Genesis, 2: 1-4). Another example is when the Old Testament attributes the accusations of idolatry and disobedience of God to Ibrahim (First Book of Kings, 4: 1-12). Of course, the esoteric exegetes have had to justify these through emphasizing that these events are unreal, and have tried to find mysterious and figurative meanings in them ('Azīz, n.d.: 25). At any rate, the foregoing accusations and similar cases are not true and God's prophets are free from sins.

New Testament

By attributing some qualities and actions to Jesus (a), Gospels have tainted his sacred name. For instance, it is claimed in some Gospels that Jesus excessively drunk wine (Luke, 7: 32-35, Matthew, 11:17-20). An assertion is attributed to him that resembles the utterances of those who greedily drink wine and are sad over their lack of access to it (Matthew, 26: 27-29; Mark, 14: 23, 37; Luke, 22: 17-18). There is also an assertion attributed to him that has been taken as the source of Trinity (John, 10:33-37; Matthew, 22:41-46).

Historical and geographical mistakes

Some researchers believe that there are numerous suchlike historical and

geographical mistakes in the Bible. For example, there is not even one date in the Gospels that does not disagree with the real dates. When was Jesus born? To answer this question, any believer will refer to the current Christian year and will say: "Everyone in the world knows that the Common Era began with the birthday of Jesus." Nonetheless, there are some complications in this regard (Wolf, 2006: 38-39). Another example is the 14th verse of 12th chapter of the Book of Exodus in which the length of Israelites' residence in Egypt is mentioned as 430 years, while this has been 215 years (Hindī, n.d., vol. 2: 257-352).

Manuscript mistakes

The development of the Bible manuscripts has been a gradual process and has continued for centuries. However, this is not the case with the noble Qur'ān, as its manuscript was determined in a period close to the lifetime of the Prophet (a) in less than two decades.

The Judaist tradition attributes the collection of the Bible to different authors, with the first one being Prophet Moses. According to this tradition, this collection has been gradually written down during approximately 1000 years (Buṭrus, 1995: 971; Metzger, 1993: 386). However, since the new researchers – relying on definitive evidences – deem the final writing date of this collection to be after the Babylonian captivity, this book is a collection of small and large passages with different topics written by various people (Faghālī, n.d., vol. 2: 16-39; Ṣamū'īl, 1993: 205; Browning, 1997: 212).

Coleman writes about the alternative spellings in the New Testament: "Sometimes these differences originate from unintentional mistakes" (Al-Kitāb al-Muaqaddas, 1988: 52). Some believe that writing a completely mistake-free copy of a book is out of the human potential (Miller, 1941: 77). Since Hebrew orthography has been without diacritics, many mistakes happened in these copies. The Bible exegetes believe that all these mistakes are about numbers and spelling of words rather than the essential teachings, and only indicate the fallibility of the human (Riyāḍ, 1998: 66-67).

Christian and Judaist scholars have come to confess to the existence of contradiction in the Bible. The attribution of fallibility to the Bible is not wrong, and is an issue proved in reality (Mahāwash al-Urdunī, 1992: 71).

The rate of the Testaments' freedom from contradiction

A careful examination of the themes of the Bible gives in many contradictions, which can be categorized into various groups. Raḥmatullāh Hindī says: "The discrepancies that exist between two books or two chapters in a book – sometimes between two cases in one chapter or one case in two copies, etc. – mostly originate from spelling. However, mistakes are about

the case itself and its meaning. Knowing mistakes is possible through their conflict with reality, common sense, history, reason, researcher reports, or what is evident in religion" (Hindī, n.d., vol. 1: 168; Balāghī Najafī, 1982: 428; Muṭ'anī, 2005: 93).

Likewise, Ibn Ḥazm Andulusī believes that what is in the hands of Jews is not a divine book, because there are many contradictions in it while there is no contradiction in the divine revelation (Ibn Ḥazm Andulusī, 2002: 120).

The German theologists have suggested that the Bible is the outcome of the efforts of many people and so, it sometimes shows internal conflicts, and the same text analysis and interpretation techniques that are used for other works can be applied to it (McGrath, 2006: 190). The discussion of the existing contradictions in the Bible can be examined from some different angles.

God's depiction in the existing Torah
One of the issues that damages the infallibility of the Old Testament is the description of God using inappropriate attributes or suggesting contradictory claims about Him. In this book, God is sometimes illustrated as a being even lower than the human and at other times as the absolute perfection. There are numerous suchlike cases, out of which some are given in the following lines.

Physical similarity of the human and God (Anthropomorphism)
The Torah illustrates the human and God with the same physical shape: "And God said: Let's create Adam in the shape of Us an and similar to Us … So God created Adam in His shape. He created him in the shape of God." (Book of Genesis, 1:27). While, this same Torah rejects any similarity between the created and the Creator, and quotes God as saying: "I am the absolute Almighty and no one else is so. I am God and no one is like Me" (Book of Isaiah, 46: 10).

Based on this anthropomorphist perception, many human actions[1] are attributed in to Torah to God. According to Jean Bottéro, it can be said that God in the Torah is like a human agent: He extracts water from the underground like a well-digger, and makes the human and then his wife and animals from mud like a potter (Āshtiyānī, 1990: 246). In addition to the human action, the Torah even believes in the human limbs for God (First Book of kings, 18:46; Book of Exodus, 8:16; Book of Deuteronomy, 9: 10; Book of Exodus, 24:10). In order to provide external and internal interpretations of such metaphorical utterances, theologists use both intellectual reasons and propositions that illustrate God through superhuman

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1. Ascension in the Book of Genesis, 17: 22; regret, ibid., 6:6 & the first book of Samuel , 15: 35; seeing God in the Book of Exodus, 5: 21.

attributes (Book of Exodus, 30:10; Book of Leviticus, 2:3; First Book of Chronicles, 16:25 & 29:11).

Some researchers believe that the anthropomorphist interpretation has been firstly common among laypeople and secondly has come into effect due to the social milieu of the Jews. For example, there were some Jews who followed part of their neighboring Canaanites' religious rites and believed in the "Ba'l" Gods and had come to choose Ba'lism over belief in Yahweh (Nās, 1997:499-50; Wolfsen, 2008: 107-110). Therefore, as the purification of God from suchlike physical attributes is so important for theologians, they have claimed that instead of saying "how God is", we should say "How God is not." This viewpoint has led to negative theology in Judaism and Christianity (Tawfīqī, 2004: 151).

One of the Bible researchers has raised a certain point about the meaning of "ṣurat": "Ṣurat means shadow rather than the outer form" (Marqaṣ Ibrāhīm, 2004: 1). Such a meaning is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "And they serve the shadow and analogy of the celestial things, as Moses was inspired when he was on his way to make the tent, because He tells him 'Beware! Make everything like the model that was shown to you in the mountain'" (Epistle to the Hebrews, 8:5-5). One exegete deems the meaning of this utterance to be that although the human cannot be completely like God, he should reflect the divine nature and glory through kindness, patience, grace, etc. (McDonald, 1998: 9).

The attribution of lying accusation to God

It is asserted in the Torah that God told Adam "Beware! Never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because the day you eat from it you will die" (Book of Genesis, 2: 17) in order to prevent him from eating the forbidden fruit. In this occasion, the Torah presents God this way and in another occasion, it calls Him righteous: "And You have been just in all these things that have happened to us, because You have acted upon the right…" (Book of Nehemiah, 9: 33). In the commentaries of the Bible, two trees are mentioned: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Two different opinions have been suggested about these two trees.

A) These two trees are real but are both mentioned in a mysterious way. Eating the fruit of the tree of life represents living eternally with God.

B) These two trees are real, but have different features. Then, by eating the fruit of the tree of life, the human might get an eternal life and constantly use it like the children of God (McDonald, 1998: 10-11).

For some others, the tree is mentioned to refer to the spiritual realities. In fact, this tree resembles a test for the trustworthiness of the human. This test aims at helping the human achieve a kind of character elaboration, and

knowing the good and the evil also wants to test the human stability in obedience or his falling into disobedience. The natural death is also not limited to the physical death; rather, God wants to take the human to a higher degree of existence through death (Jamā'a min al-lāhūtī'īn, 1986, vol. 1: 148-149).

The examination of the agreement between the New Testament and the Old Testament

Since the attachment of the New Testament to the Old Testament and the formation of the Christians' Bible, some Christian thinkers found some verses of the New Testament as disagreeing with the Old Testament and questioned the divinity of the Bible. Due to the incongruence between the Torah and the Gospel, Tolstoy did not consider them as divine revelation. He wrote: "These two books are incongruent. The Torah introduces justice as 'eye for eye …', while in the Gospel, the rule for justice is that "Do not resist the outlaw; if you were slapped on the right cheek, bring forth your left cheek" (Matthew, 5:38-39; Luke, 6:29). Then, how is it possible to call both definitions of justice as the divine inspiration?" In his opinion, we should not repeat the mistake of the Church to try to bring about accord between the verses of the Old Testament and the New Testament, because one of these two is divine revelation and the other one is a human text.

There are some who have considered the assertion of the Gospel to be the recommendation to accept oppression, have objected to it, and have possibly made a fuss over it, without taking into account the atmosphere in which it is issued. Nonetheless, Jesus warns at the beginning of his utterance that he does not want to use these recommendations to nullify the Torah orders (e.g. retaliation law), but wants to complete them. The main audience of this utterance of the Gospel, i.e. Christians and Christian thinkers, consider it an exaggerated moral recommendation that only implies forgiving in personal matters (Tawfīqī, 2004: 146).

The examination of the harmony of the New Testament verses

In different parts of the New Testament we come to verses that seem incompatible with other verses. For example, there is no mention of the ascension of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and John. However, in Luke's Gospel, the ascension occurred in the same day that Jesus (a) left the tomb and this same ascension occurred in the Acts of the Apostles forty days after the rising of the Jesus from the tomb. Unlike these two books, the ascension time is not specified in the Gospel of Mark (Bucaille, 1994: 69; Luke, 24:7; Acts of the Apostles, 1:3).

Moreover, suchlike contradictions are even observed within one Gospel.

It is narrated from Jesus (a): If I testify for myself, it is a false testimony (John, 5:30). It is also narrated from him that: If I testify for myself, it is a right testimony, because I know where I have come from and where I am going (John, 8: 14). The contradiction of these two utterances and the fact that one of them should be untrue is evident (Balāghī, 1982: 460).

The examination of the compatibility in the teachings (decrees)

It is narrated from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "When Jesus is with the disciples, their fasting has no benefit and goodness, and is rather useless and amiss, like the mourning of the boys of house in which there is a wedding until the groom is among them, or like a new patch on old clothes where the patch gets off the clothes and worsens the torn clothes, or like putting the fresh wine in an old wineskin where the skins get torn and the wine spills out" (Matthew, 9:14; Mark, 2:18-23; Luke, 5:22-38). This contradicts his speech to his disciples, where he says: "Verily fasting is among the principles of faith and some charismatic acts and sublime positions cannot be reached through any path other than prayer and fasting, and some devils do not get out of the human in any way other than fasting and prayer, and so the disciples did not have the ability to expel the devils" (Matthew, 14-22; Mark, 9: 14-30).

In response to this problem it is said that in the first utterance, the main aim is not to talk about fasting, because that should be done in appropriate conditions. The story of this event is that John's disciples went on fasting to repent for their sin and to prepare themselves for the reappearance of Jesus, while the disciples of Jesus did not need this fasting, because Jesus was with them (Matthew, 4:2). That utterance has been an emphasis on the point that some conditions should be present for fasting (Marqaṣ Ibrāhīm, 2004, vol. 5: 39). In the second utterance, Jesus wanted to teach this point that some acts are more difficult and if a person wants to do them, he should rely on God more than usual (McDonald, 1998: 1929).

An examination of the compatibility of the Bible with science

The Christian figures in the early days of Christianity considered the compatibility between the Bible and science as one of the necessary elements for proving the originality of a text and Saint Augustine confirmed this in his 82nd letter. However, after the outstanding advancement of science and the ability of the human to discover hidden facts, the disagreements between the verses of the Bible and the scientific issues and new findings got clear. Therefore, the Church notables had to abandon their previous decision (i.e. comparing the Biblical verses and science) (Bucaille, 1994: 8).

The constant discovery of disagreements between the Bible and the

scientific findings continued and the Christian faithful considered the new scientific theories as a kind of opposition to the reliability of the Bible. However, Calvin[1] and Luther[2] were not so strict, and believed that the reliability and validity of the divine revelation was not within the written Scripture (The Silent Book), but rather it was in the Jesus himself and the addressee of the divine revelation (Barbour, 1996: 35). Contrary to these zealots were a group who did not deem the incompatibility of the Bible with the scientific findings and issues as destroying the sacredness of the Bible and rather tried to discover the incompatibilities.

Conclusion

A review of the discussions made in this article makes clear the following points.

1. One of the main principles in the true understanding of the Qur'ān and the Testaments is the belief in their infallibility, a stance which is very common among Muslims and Judaists, but is disputed among Christians.

2. Relying on various intellectual and narrative reasons and based on the principle that no force other than God has been effective in the formation of the Qur'ān, the Shī'a and Sunnī thinkers have strongly rejected the possibility of any mistake, error, or discrepancy in the qur'ānic verses.

3. If the noble Qur'ān talks about the issues related to nature or discusses generation and legislation, it is commenting on facts that are professed by the intellectuals and are totally true.

4. The modern Christian critics confess that there are untrue, wrong, or contradictory cases in the Biblical propositions, and this poses serious questions about the validity and reliability of these books.

5. Some issues in the Bible can be justified by considering them as esoteric and mysterious. However, when there is no indicator, the outer meaning of a statement is adopted and this brings about negative consequences.

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1. John Calvin (1509-1564)
2. Martin Luther (1483-1546)

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